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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Palestinians, Lebanon,
Iraq, Terrorism (5/3)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported that Mohammed Zuhir al-Nashashibi, Member of the PLO Executive Committee, expressed thanks and great appreciation to President Asad for launching the national fundraising campaign for the Palestinian people. "The Palestinian people appreciate the wise and brave policy of President Asad, who is doing his best to support the Palestinian people," Al-Nashashibi said in a meeting with Syria's ambassador to Jordan Ali Hammoud on Tuesday.

Papers also featured a statement by Jamil Haek, Chairman of the Political Bureau of the Lebanese Amal Movement, that some ambassadors and envoys in Beirut are still trying to prevent the Lebanese from achieving reconciliation and to block restoration of normal Lebanese-Syrian relations. "Those ambassadors attempt to impose their vision on Syrian-Lebanese relations.... They seek to distance Lebanon from its Arab environment," Haek said in a speech at a celebration held by the Movement in south Lebanon to honor Lebanese martyrs. He called for a mechanism that will ensure the continuation of the Lebanese National Dialogue to reach understanding and reconciliation among the Lebanese.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"Mohammed Zuhir al-Nashashibi, Member of the PLO Executive Committee, thanks Syria and President Asad for the fundraising campaign for the Palestinian people" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/3)

"Lahoud: We will not accept a president who will turn Lebanon over to Israel. Lebanese parties and figures denounce the attempt by some ambassadors of custodianship to prevent meeting among Lebanese and call for normalizing relations with Syria" (Government-owned Tishreen 5/3)

"One US soldier killed in Baghdad. Clashes erupt in Al-Ramadi" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/3)

"An imminent meeting will take place between Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas. Two Palestinians martyred in Israeli shelling of Jebalia.

Israel declares maximum alert" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/3)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Used Tools"

Abdul-Fattah Al-Awad, Chief Editor of government-owned Al-Thawra, on (5/3) criticized Iraqi President Jalal Talabani for his accusation that Syria is the main source of support for insurgents in Iraq, and Lebanese Druze leader Walid Junblatt for his reported meetings and contacts with Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leaders, but without naming them: "For some Arab officials, harming Syria is the shortest way to Bush's heart....

"It is a silly part of the picture that the hypocrite [Junblatt] meets with his brothers [Syrian Muslim Brotherhood] and receives contacts that ultimately concur with his call for the Americans to occupy Damascus. Jumping from Washington and embracing black ideas can only be done with an American remote control....

"A new round of lies is being cooked up against Syria.... Syria's position toward Iraq is clear.... Here no one hides his concern about Iraq's unity, not only geographic unity, but also the unity of the people, as the occupation never stops trying to create strife among Iraqis.

"Syria also stresses the need for an announcement of the withdrawal of the occupation from Iraq, because it believes that occupation is the reason for all the problems....

"All this is in the context of the American-Israeli plan for the region.... The Syrian successes that have been scored, vis-a-vis the failure that slaps others every morning and evening, tempt others to direct further worthless 'offenses' against Syria, while they convince Syria ever more that it is moving in the right direction....
"Small pawns still have a role to play, but they should prepare themselves for an auction. It would be exciting to see some Arab officials being sold as used items."

"Terrorism on the largest scale "

Commenting on the US State Department admission that terrorist operations worldwide in 2005 rose four-fold over the prior year, Isam Dari, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (5/2): "The problem and the tragedy is that US President George Bush's administration launched its war on terror without having a clear vision about terror....

"The US Administration labels every resistance as terrorism and defends the terrorism that some governments practice as self defense.... What is worse is that what the US Administration terms war on terrorism is seen by peoples and international organizations as institutionalized terrorism...."

In an apparent reference to the Syrian Brotherhood, Isam Dari says: "The United States is opening its doors and funds to organizations that practiced terrorism on the largest scale, carried out terrorist operations against innocent civilians and government establishments, and assassinated scientists, intellectuals, religious figures, and others....

"Has the superpower in today's world sunk to the point of allying itself with terrorist movements in its war against a country like Syria, for example, to the point of welcoming these movements, instigating them to act, and asking its aides in the region to open their doors for them and hold in-depth and 'fraternal' meetings and discussions with them?

"The United States, through its war on terrorism, has become the biggest exporter of terrorism to the world...."

"Under the Pretext of Terrorism"

Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, (5/3): "There is a twisted logic in the US characterization of the countries and movements that resist occupation and reject the American hegemonic policy as terrorists or supporters of terrorism...."

"Within this twisted logic, the US Administration issues a report that falsely accuses Syria of sponsoring terrorism because of the presence of media offices for Palestinian organizations in Syria. This administration forgets that, in Syria, there are Palestinian people who were expelled from their homeland and who defend their rights only with words.... How could this people and the country that hosts them be described as terrorists while Israel is not asked about the daily terrorism that it has been practicing for decades, and is not asked to implement UN resolutions?

"Syria suffered from terrorism and from the terrorists who are now turning into dear guests of Washington and some of its allies in the region, allies who have labeled Syria as an enemy of Lebanon and Israel as a friend."

"America, an Endeavor to Close Doors between Syria and Lebanon"

Salim Aboud, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/3): "There is no crisis between Syria and Lebanon.... The current tension in relations between the two countries is caused by foreign interference...."

"Syria and Lebanon can talk directly to resolve any issue.... The Higher Syrian-Lebanese Council still exists, and the economic and cultural agreements between the two countries are stronger than all the diplomatic representations that are embodied by embassies...."

"Relations of blood, history, and geography have made Lebanon and Syria two countries with one people.... There is no evidence that Syria was involved in the Al-Hariri assassination.... The escalation between Lebanon and Syria serves American-Israeli interests...."

"Washington and Tel Aviv are acting, not out of love for Lebanon, but out of hatred toward Syria because of its solid pan-Arab positions against the American-Israeli plans...."

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